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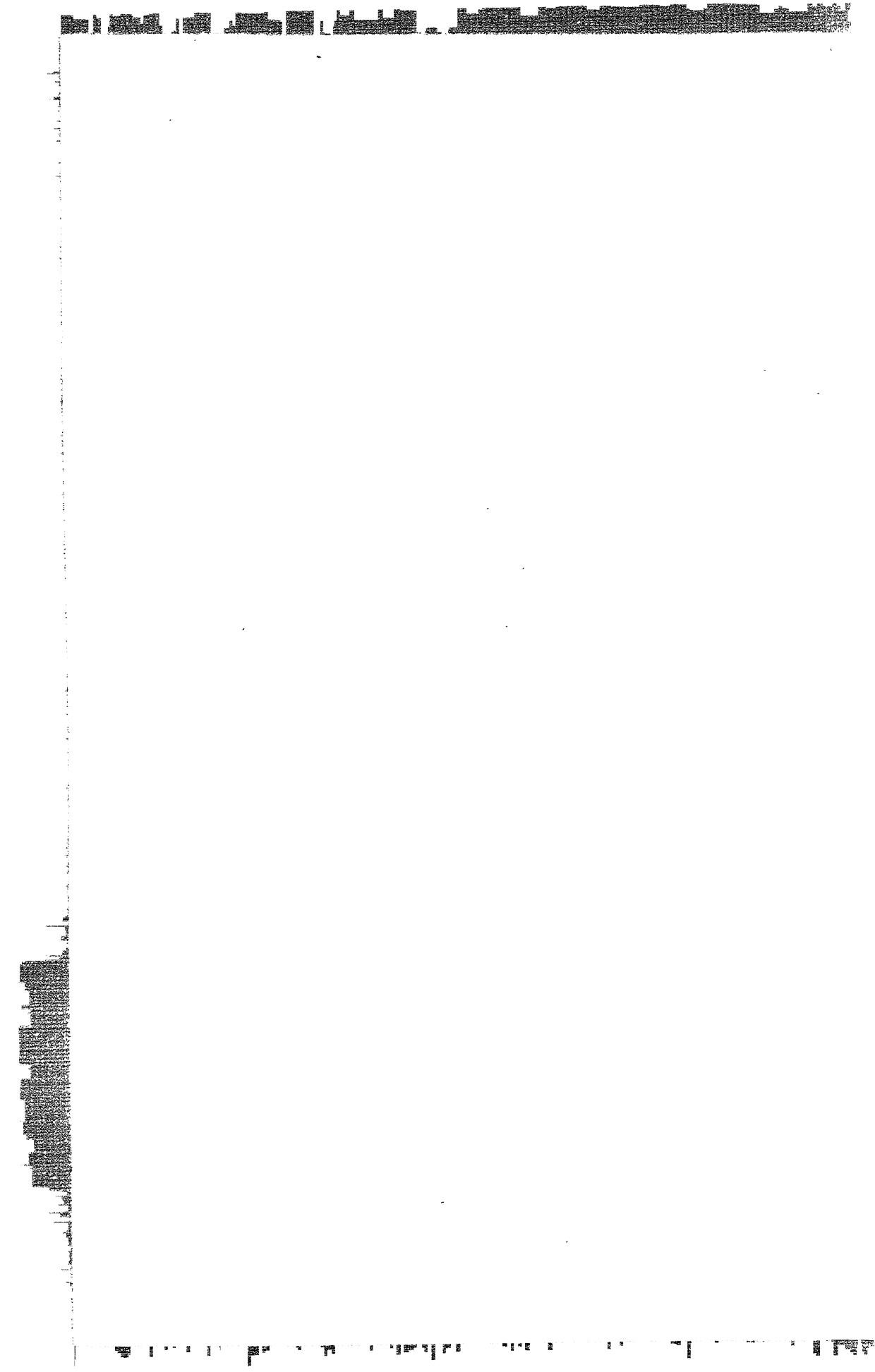
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Jour. of Am. Folk-Lore
July-Sept. '88

WHAT BEFELL THE SLAVE-SEEKERS.

A STORY OF THE HAIDAHS ON QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S ISLAND, B. C.

FROM time immemorial until the year 1875, or perhaps even later, every native tribe on the northwest coast of America not only used to keep slaves, but often made raids on other tribes, especially on those with whom they were not on friendly terms, and kidnapped all persons on whom they could lay their hands, in order to obtain slaves for domestic use and also for selling to others.

Early in the present century, a large party of these Haidahs embarked in one of their large canoes, which hold from twenty-five to thirty warriors, for the purpose of making a raid on the Kittamats, a tribe living opposite the Queen Charlotte's Islands, on the mainland of British Columbia, upon the north arm of Gardner's Canal. Though their absence was prolonged, their wives and relatives, who expected them to be absent from five to six weeks, were not greatly disturbed. When weeks turned into months, their friends became alarmed, and strong search parties were sent forth in all directions. After visiting many islands, and seeking far and wide, these tired of the fruitless search, and gave up the wanderers as lost.

The slave-raiders had intended to go to Kittamat. Had the search proceeded thither, such a course, under the existing conditions, would have been equivalent to a declaration of war. Pride and ignorance of the languages of their neighbors were the principal cause of the wars and ill-feeling between the various nations: for example, some ill-timed joke would, through ignorance on the part of the members of another tribe, be construed into an insult, which their pride would not allow to go unpunished. On other parts of this coast the traders found it necessary to create a trade language or jargon, the Chinook, than which I know nothing that has done so

¹ The children have coined this word to be the name of this particular game. The word is used only by them.

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much to civilize our native races. It stimulated friendly intercourse between tribes, by enabling them to converse with each other, whence sworn foes became lasting friends; and when meeting at any of the Hudson Bay Company's trading-posts, they would converse for hours of relatives who disappeared and never were heard of again. A few years ago the Haidahs and their ancient foes, the Kittamats, met and settled old feuds in a friendly manner. Among other topics, the conversation turned on the raid mentioned, when the following facts were elicited:—

A long while ago, a large party of Kittamats were on a hunting and fishing expedition, and, having reached a little island, in which there was a good harbor, they hauled up their canoes. One of the party, during their stay, happening to go into the long grass and the bushes, found concealed a large canoe. This they hastily launched and departed, taking the canoe and everything in it away with them, well knowing it to be a Haidah canoe, and that its owners in all probability were not far off. When they reached home they told how they had taken the canoe, and left the Haidahs to perish. Some time after, when they thought that the party on the island would be in a starving condition, and consequently glad to accept any terms, a large party of Kittamats went to look for them. Sailing cautiously round the island, they were seen by the Haidahs, who gladly hailed them. Going on shore, the latter presented a pitiable appearance, and seemed ready to accept anything in preference to death from starvation. The Kittamats demanded what they were doing there. In answer they said they came to hunt, and that in their absence their canoe had been stolen, and they expressed their desire to get away. The visitors told them to come on board, and they would see what could be done.

These terms the sufferers disliked, but there was no choice. As soon as all were aboard, sail was made by their captors for the Kittamat village, where all the prisoners were made slaves. Some were kept for a time in the village, while others were sold to distant tribes; and, at the time of the interview, nothing was known, even to their captors, as to the whereabouts of any of them, if alive. So much is certain, that none of them ever returned to their native village. And thus it happened that the slave-raiders were themselves made slaves.

James Deans.

VICTORIA, B. C.

